DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 531 JC 900 264

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TITLE Comparison of Perceptions of "Preparedness" of John Abbott C.E.G.E.P. Nursing Graduates: Prior to Graduation and After.
INSTITUTION John Abbott Coll., Sainte Anne de Bellevue (Quebec).
PUB DATE 5 Jan 89
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; Employment Experience; Followup Studies; Graduate Surveys; *Nurses; *Nursing Education; Outcomes of Education; *Participant Satisfaction; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Student Attitudes; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

A study of John Abbott College's nursing graduates was conducted to determine how well prepared for their professional responsibilities the graduates saw themselves just prior to graduation and later after working in the nursing field. A sample of 98 nursing students who graduated between 1986 and 1988 was surveyed, with 93% responding to the pre-graduation survey and 68% responding after working in the field. The pre-graduation questionnaire asked students to assess how well the program achieved its stated goals and objectives for student preparation and to rate each semester of the program in terms of difficulty. Open-ended questions solicited opinions on the program's strengths and weaknesses. The post-graduation questionnaire consisted of questions on demographics; nursing goals; perceptions of preparation to work as a beginning practitioner in pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatry, medicine, and surgery; rating of tools, roles, and aspects of patient care management; and open-ended questions about program strengths and weaknesses. Questionnaire results identified only five areas for improvement: (1) fostering a desire to continue education in nursing throughout one's professional life; (2) fostering student-teacher collaboration in the learning process; (3) managing time effectively with regard to patient care; (4) meeting the demands of the average patient assignment; and (5) delegating tasks to auxiliary personnel. The main program strengths included nursing laboratory facilities and availability, professors' teaching skills, integration of classroom content and laboratory activities with clinical practice, and individual development. Overall, nursing graduates considered their preparation to be good to excellent in certain areas of the program, both before and after graduation. (WJT)

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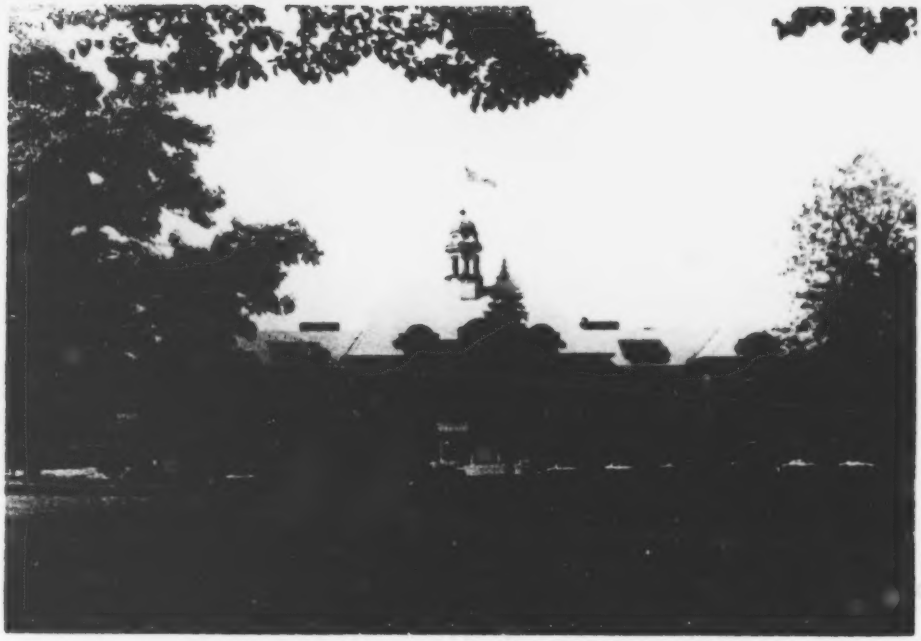

"Comparison of Perceptions of 'Preparedness' of John Abbott C.E.G.E.P. Nursing Graduates: Prior to Graduation and After"

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Depot legal - 2e trimestre 1990

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FINAL REPORT

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARIAT

JOHN ABBOTT COLLEGE

TITLE: "Comparison of Perceptions of 'Preparedness' of John Abbott C.E.G.E.P. Nursing Graduates: Prior to Graduation and After"

NAMES - PROJECT CO-ORDINATORS: Carmen Iton & Judy Sabiston

SUBMISSION DATE OF PROJECT TO R & D: January 5, 1989

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: August 31st, 1989

SPECIFIC R & D PRIORITY AREA: Post C.E.G.E.P. Analysis: Integration of Students in the Labor Market

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A. STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE OR PROBLEM

How prepared do the John Abbott nursing graduates perceive themselves in providing care to individuals of all ages in an acute health care setting? The nursing department has been surveying the graduates of the nursing program, just prior to graduation since December 1986, to identify their perceptions of their "preparedness". We will take this survey one step further. Are these perceptions of "preparedness" of these same graduates the same or different, once they have been practicing nursing? It is expected that the graduates will perceive that they were not as prepared as originally thought.

Faculty would benefit from input and feedback from the graduates given their experience in nursing since graduation. Student input is a critical component of evaluation and should be considered to improve the program.

B. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

1. To obtain data on the perceptions of "preparedness" of John Abbott nursing graduates having worked in nursing practice.

2. To compare the perceptions of preparedness of the graduates just prior to graduation with the perceptions of these same graduates after they have worked in nursing practice.

3. To have a questionnaire response rate of over 50% (a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% is good [Babbie, 1986).

C. METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The method selected was a descriptive survey questionnaire of ninety-eight nursing graduates. They were surveyed prior to graduation and after working in nursing. Comparisons are made between these two sets of data.

Literature Review

Computer searches using the MEDLINE (Index of National & International Health Related Literature) and CINAHL (Current Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature) for 1980 to 1989 were used to gather information regarding graduates' perceptions of preparedness and program evaluation in nursing. Broad categories were needed to locate pertinent articles and books

Sample

The sample included the ninety-eight John Abbott C.E.G.E.P. nursing graduates of December 1986 to May 1988 inclusive (four classes). The graduates surveyed prior to graduation numbered ninety-one (93%) and the response rate post-graduation was sixty-seven (68%).

Description and Development of Instruments

Pre-Graduation Questionnaire

The "Program Evaluation Questionnaire 601 Students" was developed by the Nursing Evaluation Committee at John Abbott in collaboration with consultants Margaret Waller (Faculty Professional Development Committee Member at John Abbott) and Morna Flood Consedine (Evaluation Design Consultant). The items on the questionnaire were taken from program documents and issues identified by the Nursing Evaluation Committee.

The pre-graduation questionnaire had two sections. In Section I, students were requested to assess how well the program achieved its stated goals and objectives for student preparation. The questionnaire required the respondents to rank items using a Likert Scale. This scale was taken from the Computerized Assessment of Teaching Systems (C.A.T.S.) standard questionnaire. Section II asked the students to rate each semester of the program in terms of how easy or difficult it was for them. In addition, open-ended questions requesting information on what the students perceived were the strengths of the program and what they perceived needed improvement.

Post-Graduation Questionnaire

"The Post-Graduation Questionnaire" was a modification of the pre- graduation questionnaire. To ensure that the

post-graduation questionnaire remained comparable to the pre-graduation questionnaire, it was reviewed by others (nursing and non-nursing personnel). A few revisions were done, mostly concerning the format.

Section I included demographic questions such as when they graduated, whether they anticipated taking further courses, whether they were employed as a nurse, present position, hours worked per week, type of institution/setting, where employed and the area of clinical practice.

Section II was comparable to Section I of the pre-graduation questionnaire (nursing goals). Section III was designed to gather their perceptions of their "preparations" to work as a beginning practitioner in pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatry, medicine and surgery. In section IV the graduates rated the tools, roles and aspects of patient care management. Lastly Section V requested the graduates to answer open-ended questions on the strengths of the John Abbott program and those areas needing improvement.

Data Collection

The pre-graduation questionnaires were distributed during class time, at the end of each semester to each graduating class (December 1986, May 1987, December 1987, and May 1988). The questionnaire was done on a voluntary basis.

The post-graduation questionnaire was mailed March 1st, 1989 to all graduates (December 1986 to May 1988 inclusive). Since the graduates have been working for different periods (10 months to 2½ years), the periods these graduates had to recall information differed greatly. This is a flaw in the methodology. It would have been preferable to survey the graduates at the same time after graduation, for example, after working for a year.

Prior to mailing the post-graduation questionnaire extensive networking with teachers and graduates had to be done by the investigators to locate the graduates and update the mailing list. All the graduates were telephoned and informed about the survey and their addresses were confirmed. This was done because Fowler (1984) states that personal contact is significantly more effective than writing a letter. The task of locating the graduates took longer than expected but this is not surprising given the present situation in nursing: contract negotiations, discontent with wages, the exodus of Quebec nurses and the high turnover rate of 20% in Montreal hospitals (Judith Collinge, 1989).

The post-graduation questionnaire was accompanied with a covering letter, a stamped envelope and a stamped addressed postcard. The purpose of the postcard was to increase the

response rate and ensure anonymity. The graduates were to return the postcard with their name on it separate from the questionnaire. The graduates who had not returned the postcard by March 20th, 1989 were telephoned as a reminder.

Data Analysis

The pre-graduation questionnaires were coded and analyzed using C.A.T.S. (Computerized Assessment of Teaching Systems, 1987). Subsequently, the pre-graduation questionnaire data was recoded along with the post-graduation questionnaire using S.P.S.S.X.(TM). The data sheets were double checked for errors. A descriptive analysis was done with the data on both sets of questionnaires. The information provided frequencies of the data. Because the data was in the form of a Likert scale, responses to the questions were cross-tabulated by class for the pre and post-graduation questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A descriptive analysis was done comparing the pre-graduation results with the post-graduation results. For this study the rating scale of "No improvement needed (excellent in this aspect)" and "Little improvement needed (generally good in this aspect)" were collapsed together. If the resulting

percentage of rating was 70% or above, these items were considered "not needing improvement" and will not be discussed.

Of the 42 items on the questionnaire, only the following five items rated needing improvement, according to the cut-off point criteria:

Terminal Objectives:

1. Fosters a desire to continue your own education in nursing throughout your professional life.
2. Fosters student-teacher collaboration in the learning process.

Patient Care Management Goals:

3. Manages time effectively
4. Meets the demands of the average patient assignment
5. Delegates tasks to auxiliary personnel

Content Analysis of Open-Ended Questions

All responses to each of the three questions were tabulated. A content analysis was done by key word and key phrase for each question. The results were used to create themes and broad categories, the authors and one independent individual sorted the responses into the following categories.

The results were summarized as:

1. Areas of strengths in program: The main areas mentioned were (1) John Abbott College Nursing Framework nursing laboratory facilities and availability, (3) Teaching skills of the professors, (4) Integration of classroom content and laboratory activities to clinical practice (5) development of the individual.

2. Areas mentioned needing improvement in program preparation were:

   (1) Increase clinical hours

   (2) Increase the patient load.

   The aspect which was most mentioned was the need for increased clinical time (37.5%) followed by increased patient load (21.4%). More realistic picture of what is required in practice (reality shock), and an increase in number of critically ill patients assigned were rated by (12.5%) of respondents as needing improvement.

E. CONCLUSIONS

This project set out to answer a series of questions concerning the degree to which preparation of graduates is suited towards nursing practice.

The first question, "Do graduates perceive they are prepared to practice nursing after completing the program and have been working as nurses? In general the results of the study indicate that a high percentage of the students at graduation and later in practice perceived their "preparation" to be good to excellent in certain areas of the program.

The areas which were highly rated at graduation and after graduation included the preparation for the goals of the program; the nursing process; the nursing tools and nursing, the roles. Content analysis of the open-ended questions support this perception.

The second question, "Are their perceptions of 'preparedness' similar or different from their pre-graduation perception of preparedness?" Overall the perceptions are similar for most of the items on the questionnaires. One exception to this, is that of "accountability", the results indicate an increased percentage of respondents rated this item 16.2% higher in the post-graduation questionnaire than in the pre-graduation questionnaire.

The third question, "what do they perceive are the major strengths of the program? The meeting of the terminal objectives, the nursing process, nursing tools and nursing roles were highly rated. The JAC framework of nursing was especially highly rated and supported in the analysis of the open-ended questions. Teachers were rated as good resources and for being available and approachable. Integration of classroom content and laboratory activities to clinical experience at appropriate time was also perceived as a strength of the program.

The last question, "What areas do they perceive need improvement? These areas are related to preparation for nursing practice in pediatrics, obstetrics and psychiatry; patient care management; fostering student teacher collaboration in the learning process and fostering a desire to continue education in nursing throughout professional life.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase the clinical hours
2. Increase the student's patient load.
3. Put more emphasis on common emergency situations
4. Assign more critically ill patients
5. Faculty discussions and incorporation of ideas on how to foster desire to continue nursing education.
6. Faculty discussions and incorporation of ideas on how to foster student-teacher collaboration.

G. REFERENCES

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